City of Whitehorse

PRESS RELEASE

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Release: 2008-02

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 28, 2008

TAX INCREASE HELD TO 7.5%

Whitehorse Mayor Bev Buckway stated today that "City Council and Staff have worked extremely hard since December to keep the anticipated tax increase to what was proposed. We have taken into consideration the assessment increases and the feedback we received from the public and have made significant changes to the budget to maintain our commitments".

While the increase in assessments have been significant, the rate that properties will be taxed has been reduced to ensure that the effective result is the 7.5% increase proposed in the Budget Speech of December 10, 2007. This has involved removing some of the desired changes to services that had been anticipated and an across-the-board cutting of more than 10% to budgets to departmental budgets.

The Council has raised the tax on non-residential properties by 9.5% for 2008. This is due partly to the imbalance between the assessment changes to non-residential properties this year.

One significant remaining addition to City services is the inclusion of the Downtown Loop and enhanced afternoon peak services for the Transit Department. Also included are fare increases that will make our fares similar to those in Yellowknife. Changes to the enhanced afternoon peak service and the fare increase will take effect in April, and the Downtown Loop will start in July.

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"The inclusion of the enhanced afternoon peak service and the Downtown Loop are a significant start to including the recommendations of the Transit Task Force." said Mayor Buckway, "Changes in other areas of the City to improve our sustainability have been funded by the Gas Tax Funding program, and only those projects that can show improvement or efficiency to City services will be implemented."

Other significant projects that will be undertaken during the current budget cycle include the rebuilding of the Fire Hall at the top of the Two Mile Hill which will improve training and emergency measures operations along with consolidating the Fire Department and the Bylaw Department into one building.

The City is working toward providing land for development through the sale of lots in Motorways, Stan McCowan , and Arkell Subdivisions. Re-development in Takhini North and the development of the Porter Creek Lower Bench will provide for a stable lot supply for many years to come.

With the rising costs that face everyone, the City is struggling to maintain the level of service currently provided. While there is a significant tax increase, and increases to some user fees, the City has ensured that the cost to the taxpayer is reflective of the services desired.

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